

In other words, according to the Justice Department, this bill, in its current form, will not lead to stiffer sentences for these horrible offenses and, in fact, may make it harder to prosecute child sex traffickers.

In light of these concerns, I have repeatedly offered to work with the author of this bill in the House of Representatives. My staff has communicated that we could revise this bill and expedite its passage into law. We could meet the same noble goal of the original legislation but do it in a way that is consistent with the express—express—concerns of the Department of Justice.

The changes needed are really quite simple. Instead of amending the applicable statutes, the amended legislation would ensure that the sentencing guidelines account for child trafficking that was committed in a school zone.

This simple revision guarantees that the recommended sentence for a defendant will be higher if the defendant knowingly committed the offenses in a school zone.

It also resolves all of the infirmities identified by the Department of Justice that could jeopardize prosecutions of child sex traffickers.

I want to make it clear. I take this matter very seriously, as I am sure the Senator from Texas and the Senator from Minnesota do. We watched carefully as the Department of Justice set their analysis. We responded to it in a responsible way, and we said to the House author of the bill, please accept these changes. They achieve your original goal, and do it in a way that would not make it more difficult to prosecute those who are guilty.

Unfortunately—unfortunately—so far, the author of this bill in the House of Representatives has refused to work with us on these changes.

Their position is that we cannot change a single word of the bill. That is not the approach to take when we are dealing with legislation of such a serious matter. We should take care that every word achieves the goal that we all want to seek—to lessen number of crimes of sex trafficking.

As a result, we are at an impasse because I am unwilling to pass legislation that the prosecutors tell us will make their job more difficult. And I believe that they are right, in our own analysis.

Madam President, for these reasons, I object to this request, but I reiterate, as I have over and over and over again to the House author, that I stand ready and more than willing to work with our colleagues in the House, along with Senator CORNYN and Senator KLOBUCHAR, to ensure that this legislation moves forward.

To express my good faith on this, I am going to make the following request: As in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further—let me start over so it is clear on the record.

Therefore, I object to the original request for unanimous consent, and I ask that the Senator from Texas modify his request such that the Durbin substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator so modify his request?

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, reserving the right to object, the Senator from Illinois asked why can't we change this bill. Well, first of all, this bill passed unanimously in the House. If we don't pass this bill today, it is dead, and the Senator's objection to this unanimous consent request will have effectively killed this legislation for this Congress, as he knows, because we start a new Congress and we will have to start all over from scratch.

I don't know when we decided to start outsourcing our authority as the Congress of the United States to the Department of Justice.

The fact of the matter is, the changes that the Senator is suggesting would basically be just to instruct the U.S. Sentencing Commission to amend their Federal sentencing guidelines to incorporate specific offense characteristics for any offense under this legislation. So, basically, he has got another way to build a mousetrap that doesn't really change anything except the fact that he will effectively have killed this legislation this Congress, and we will have to start all over again.

The reason why I am here today and why Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE is here on the floor is because this is a problem at schools in her legislative district, where human traffickers come and they try to recruit teenage kids—girls, mainly—high school and younger, into the sex trade. And we think it is appropriate that enhanced penalties attach to these criminals who commit these terrible crimes against children in our schools.

And, unfortunately, by deferring to the Department of Justice's criticism—they are a part of the executive branch. We are a coequal branch of government. It is our job to say what the law is, and it is their job to enforce it.

So I am sorry that the Senator from Illinois believes that the Department of Justice's ideas should prevail over those of the collective wisdom of both branches of the Congress. Like I said, this bill passed unanimously in the House of Representatives; but, because of his objection, it will effectively be dead for this legislative session. And I think it is a missed opportunity and a crying shame.

I object to his request to modify my request for unanimous consent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. DURBIN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 1195, Richard L. Revesz, of New York, to be Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Richard L. Revesz, of New York, to be Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Revesz nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2023—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Delaware.

AFGHAN ADJUSTMENT ACT

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I come to the floor for a few moments with a friend and a colleague, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM of South Carolina, but speaking on behalf of a much broader group of Senators.

Senator AMY KLOBUCHAR of Minnesota has been my partner in this. We have 10 Senators who are cosponsors of an urgent bill, the Afghan Adjustment Act, and the message behind it is simple: that we have to do right by those who fought alongside us for 20 years.

Madam President, I have two letters with me that I will briefly reference that Shawn VanDiver and the great folks of #AfghanEvac pulled together and presented to us. They have been sent to the majority and minority leaders of the House and the Senate—one signed by 44 flag officers. And I will read one sentence:

We are convinced the Afghan Adjustment Act furthers the national security interests of the United States. It is also a moral imperative.

And the other, from every former Ambassador from the United States to